

CONTACT TRACING IN SOUTH KOREA

RightsCon 2021

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Numbers

- First Case on June 20, 2020.
- As of June 8, 2021:
 - 454 daily confirmed cases
 - 145901 total no. of patients
 - 1975 deaths

Contributing factors to the success

- Rapid development and approval of diagnostic kits
- expeditious and active diagnostic tests
- **identification of contacts through epidemiological investigations of patients**
- **transparent disclosure of infectious disease-related information like the travel log of confirmed patients**
- mask-wearing culture
- social distancing campaigns
- voluntary cooperation of citizens

Legal Basis of Contact Tracing

- Korea established a legal basis for contact tracing through the amendment of the Infectious Disease Prevention Act after the MERS outbreak in 2015.
- New provisions were introduced to collect medical history, credit card use details, location etc. of confirmed and suspected infectious disease patients and to disclose information which authorities decide necessary.

Epidemiological Investigation & Contact Tracing

- **Article 76-2 (1) of the Infectious Disease Prevention Act**
 - Requester: The Commissioner of the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency, mayors, province(Do) governor
 - Request requirements: when necessary to prevent infectious diseases and block the spread of infection
 - Party obligated to provide information: the heads of relevant central administrative, the heads of local governments, public institutions, medical institutions, pharmacies, corporations, organizations, and individuals

Epidemiological Investigation & Contact Tracing

- **Article 76-2 (1) of the Infectious Disease Prevention Act**
 - requested object:
 - **Personal information**, such as names, resident registration numbers, addresses, and telephone numbers (including cell phone numbers)
 - **Prescriptions and medical records**
 - **Records of immigration control** during the period determined by the Minister of Health and Welfare
 - Other information for monitoring the movement of such patients - **credit card, debit card, pre-paid card, transportation card statements, and video compiled through image data processing equipment(i.e. CCTV)**

Epidemiological Investigation & Contact Tracing

- **Article 76-2 (2) of the Infectious Disease Prevention Act**

- the Commissioner of the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency, mayors, province governor or the head of local government may request any telecommunications business operator and the personal location information provider to provide **location information** of patients of an infectious disease and persons suspected of an infectious disease, in this case, through police.

Epidemiological Investigation & Contact Tracing

- **Article 76-2 (2) of the Infectious Disease Prevention Act**

- Base station access information
- Itaewon case: in the process of identifying contact people of mass infection in the Itaewon club in early May 2020, the Seoul Metropolitan Government and the health authority requested base station access information from the mobile operator. The list of people who stayed for more than 30 minutes was selected based on the history of accessing 17 base stations around the club between midnight and 5 AM every day from April 24 to May 6. The number of people picked in this way reached **10,905**.

Disclosure of movement

- **Article 34-2 (1) of the Infectious Disease Prevention Act**
- “the Disease Control and Prevention Agency or local governments shall promptly disclose information with which citizens are required to be acquainted for preventing the infectious disease, such as the movement paths, transportation means, medical treatment institutions, and contacts of patients of the infectious disease, etc.”, when a crisis warning higher than 'Caution' is issued.

Check-ins (Entry-log system)

- The government launched the QR code-based <KI-Pass> system on July 1, 2020.
- The government puts forward “user consent under the Personal Information Protection Act” as the legal basis for the electronic entry log system.
- The government can check who entered a facility at any time by combining personal information collected. In other words, whereabouts of each individual are under the surveillance of the government as the entry log is mandatory not only for infectious disease patients or suspected patients. It is substantially general surveillance in that it is a policy for all citizens.

Monitoring of self-quarantine

- As some self-quarantined persons did not follow quarantine measures, the government began to consider introducing a wristband that is linked to <the Self-Quarantine Safety Protection> app.
- Eventually the government introduced a wristband named “safety Band” on April 27, 2020.
- The government says that wearing the safety band is based on the user's consent, but if they do not agree, they will be quarantined at a facility and imposed the cost of isolation.

Thoughts

- Few countries employ extensive data collection and surveillance technologies like Korea.
- At the same time, Korea has succeeded in controlling the number of confirmed cases without lockdowns and curfews.
- It is difficult to conclude that the Korean model is the most or more repressive in that restrictions on the right to liberty of movement are also limitations on fundamental rights.
- However, it is not clear whether mandatory contact tracing or surveillance measures are really effective.

THANK YOU!

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